

MARK TWAIN JOURNAL

OFFICE OF DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

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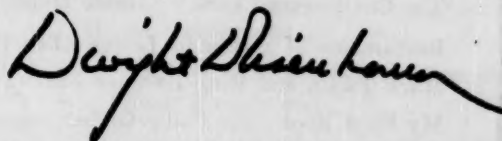
Dear Mr. Clemens:

Thank you very much for your very kind letter of recent date.

I value highly the Knight of Mark Twain membership card, and want you to know how honored I feel for having been made a Member of the Order.

Also, it is heartwarming to learn of the interest which the youngsters of America, like little Ada Long, are taking in this crusade. It certainly brings home very realistically the great feeling of responsibility.

Sincerely,



Mr. Cyril Clemens, Editor

Presidents William H. Taft, Herbert C. Hoover, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Harry S. Truman; Vice Presidents John N. Garner, Henry A. Wallace, Alben W. Barkley, and Richard M. Nixon; and Chief Justices William H. Taft, Charles Evans Hughes, Harlan F. Stone, Fred M. Vinson, and Earl Warren are also Knights of Mark Twain.

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Cyril Clemens, Editor-in-Chief

Beginning in early boyhood, I have read virtually everything of Mark Twain's that has been published, and I have always been a great admirer of both the man and his work.—*Dwight D. Eisenhower.*

Best wishes for continuous achievement in perpetuating Mark Twain's memory.—*General Omar N. Bradley.*

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C O N T E N T S

Will Rogers - Dwight D. Eisenhower.....	1
Wild Roses in China (Verse) - Celesta Pirwitz.....	2
Sherwood Anderson's Debt to Huckleberry Finn - Seymour L. Gross.....	3
The Last Time I Saw Mark Twain Willis C. Pratt, as Told to Gertrude Valliere King.....	6
Mark Twain Meets a Lady from Finland - Ernest J. Moyne.....	9
Mark Twain's "Plug" and "Chaw": An Anecdotal Parallel Cecil D. Eby, Jr.....	11
The Challengers (Verse) - Grace Hollowell.....	11
Restoration of a Howells Letter - Leo P. Coyle.....	12
Mark Twain and Ring Lardner - Howard W. Webb, Jr.....	13
My First Book - Sir Philip Gibbs.....	16
Mark Twain and the Man from Maine - Cyril Clemens.....	17
A Connecticut Yankee as a Revolutionary Document - John D. McKee.....	18
Joseph Conrad and Huckleberry Finn - Frederick R. Karl.....	21
Tributes to Mark Twain on Dedication of Birthplace Shrine - Dwight Eisenhower, Richard Nixon, Herbert Hoover, Harry S. Truman, and Christian A. Herter.....	Back Cover

Will Rogers

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

We are gathered here out of affection and respect for Will Rogers, a great American.

His career and his place in the American scene defy exact classification. He was a member of no particular profession; he was not identified with the trades or sciences—he did not seek political preference, nor was he, in any formal sense, constructor, teacher, preacher, lawyer, farmer, or soldier. Yet an adventurer at heart, he seemed something of each; a smiling wanderer through city, farm, and village. He possessed a keen insight into the things that concerned, amused, or distressed his fellows, and was gifted with an uncanny ability to relate these things to the fundamental business of making a living, of maintaining freedom, of pursuing happiness. He gave to millions who regard philosophy as something of interest only to the cloistered professor a better balanced understanding of their place in modern society. His favorite tool was the witty barb—but though sharp, to puncture pomposity, it was never poisoned to leave a lasting wound. He climbed to fame on the lazy twirls of a cow-puncher's rope—and he used his fame to reach while he entertained, to goad each of us to think about the heritage we possess—of our opportunities, our rights, our responsibilities.

Within a year, I have seen the lonely cairn that marks the spot, on the bleak borders of our northernmost frontier, where he met his end. There, with his gallant companion, Wiley Post, he had gone, following still his bent of probing into things outside the limit of everyday conscious knowledge. Just what he sought I do not know — but fitting it seemed to me that his passing should still avoid the commonplace — that his leaving should remind us, as had in life his pungent words, that there still exists a need to seek, to search, to know.

To class Will Rogers with the acknowledged philosophers of the ages would be as

false as to relate him in Thespian art to Booth, Marlowe, Jefferson, or Sothorn. He himself would have ridiculed any such attempt. He was an observer rather than a profound thinker, entertainer rather than interpretive actor. But though he belonged to neither of these fields, he invaded both; and in so doing, gave to his contemporaries thought for everyday consumption, bits to spur our minds even as we smiled at the package in which we received the gift.

He knew those the world called great but stood in awe of no man. Purists, grammarians, even scholars and statesmen may have at times deplored his flagrant disregard of the particular dogmas each of them held dear. But the only Americans who failed to gain some inspiration, some mental quickening, some quiet chuckle from Will Rogers were those few totally devoid of a sense of humor and completely blind to the foibles that a mental mirror always shows. With these he was not concerned—but to the millions he brought fun and stimulus, and so he deserved what he gained, a big place in our hearts, a secure niche in our admiration.

He was a common man with uncommon qualities, and common men never failed to appreciate what he had to give. In one sentence, under the glint of a wisecrack, he could pack a century and a half of history and salt it down with an ageless truth. He once observed,

"The United States never lost a war or won a conference,"

doubtless to remind his fellow citizens that while a united America can develop irresistible power in defense of principle, rightness of principle cannot of itself assure success over human selfishness.

Most interesting it is to speculate on what he would have to say about things that trouble us today. What wisecrack would he have shot at us on a dozen differences in the

United Nations; what kind of needling would he have used to awaken us to the relationships between maintenance of our liberties and a decent life for others who desire also to remain free; what quip would he have employed to shame us into greater saving of food for the needy; what shaft would he have launched to inspire us to greater cooperation at home? Could his wit, his insight, his homely phraseology make us better see that democracy has entered its decade of greatest crisis? Could he have helped make us see that personal ambitions and desires must now take second place to national need and solidarity? Could he have made us see the inescapable truth that sheer national interest demands of us a unity of effort that must extend far beyond our national borders? Could he have made us more vigilant in the preservation of freedom, defending it from all enemies, foreign or domestic? Could he have helped strip from our eyes the scales of misunderstanding, prejudice, ignorance, fear—and so help us each to see clearly our duties to our country and ourselves, and tirelessly to struggle toward their performance?

What he would and could have done, none of us can know; none of us is Will Rogers! But certain it is that he would have tried—he would have brought to us such understanding as was granted to him. He would have done it for his love of America, his devotion to human freedom, his concern for his fellow citizens, his faith in humanity. And even more certain it is that he would have brought smiles to our faces—for he did not believe that to be earnest is to weep, that recognition and performance of duty is possible only to a doleful face. We would have squirmed under the spurs he may possibly have applied to our complacency, but we would have warmed to his infectious grin, and tried the harder to meet the requirements of our age.

He has gone—the problems remain, and he would be the first to remind us that thus it has always been. A loved one goes—even

leaders that may temporarily seem to acquire the quality of indispensability—but life continues to encounter the storms that loved ones or leaders shared with us or pointed the way to avoidance. Ours alone is the responsibility of meeting the issues of our time, but the memory of those we have lost brings inspiration to the daily task.

It is fitting that we should try to communicate to others still to come something of this inspiration born of affection, faith, and admiration. A pictorial likeness, a statue, can help to do so for it will endure long after we, gathered here today, have joined the one it commemorates. And in the day of our children's children and beyond their time, it will still testify that a sense of humor and a neighborly spirit can greatly lighten life's burden.

Will Rogers may be smiling now at the thought of capturing in a figure of bronze his humor, his humaneness, his discernment, his friendliness. Yet, if so he does, then also he knows that this statue had its birth in a friend's affection and esteem for him, and in generosity and concern for others. Knowing this, he would approve and, though vain pride of self did not mar his daily living, he would be proud in the just pride that, having harmed no man, and helped so many, those who knew him found him worthy of timeless tribute.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my high honor to unveil to the friends who love him, this statue to the memory of a great American, Will Rogers.

WILD ROSES IN CHINA

Celesta Pirwitz

I picked wild roses today
Along a country highway
And arranged a bouquet.

Earth, man and heaven bent,
Mountain and meadow lent
Oriental arrangement.

Sherwood Anderson's Debt to Huckleberry Finn

Seymour L. Gross

University of Notre Dame

Although several critics have commented in a general way on Mark Twain's influence on Sherwood Anderson's fiction,¹ no one has attempted to assess the kind or extent of that influence in a particular work of Anderson. Anderson, unlike many other authors who feel compelled to deny influences lest, as they imagine, it detract from their individuality, readily admitted his attraction to the older author and, on occasion, deliberately courted it. He once wrote Van Wyck Brooks that he had tried to write a story about an old cheese maker who was to be "Twain's type of man."² And at a later date he attributed the "wide acceptance" of "I'm a Fool" to the fact that it was "a story of immaturity," much like "Mark Twain at his best."³ For Anderson, "Mark Twain at his best" meant almost exclusively *Huckleberry Finn*: "Should not one go to *Huck Finn* for the real man, working out of real people?" he wrote Brooks in 1918.⁴

Anderson was drawn to Twain chiefly because he felt that the author of *Huckleberry Finn* shared his own point of view toward experience. Anderson could say that he understood "the rather child-like pessimism of Twain"⁵ because he too felt the same kind of primitive despair at the spectacle of a mechanistic civilization riding herd over the spirits of naturally decent human beings, crushing them, crippling them, making them into "grotesques." Of course, Twain, because he stands toward the beginning rather than the end of the pessimistic-naturalistic tradition, is neither as explicit nor as graphic in his depiction of the victims of societal distortion as Anderson, but the same impulse is there. George Willard as he steps on the train that is to take him from Winesburg forever is surely the spiritual descendant of the young boy who has "got to light out for the territory ahead of the rest": both George and Huck have to find breathing space for their souls.

Professor Irving Howe in his *Sherwood Anderson* asserts that Twain's influence on Anderson can be most clearly seen in the early portions of *Poor White* (1920) and in some of the stories in *The Triumph of the Egg* (1921). It seems to me that one of the stories in that collection, "I Want to Know Why," owes more to *Huckleberry Finn* than any other piece of fiction Anderson wrote.⁶

One of the immediately striking similarities between the story and the novel is the same use of an ironic point of view. It is not merely that both stories are told by boys who are morally finer than most of the white world which they are describing, but rather that both youngsters believe that those judgments of theirs which run counter to the accepted opinions of society are wrong, and those of society right, even though they themselves cannot see the "sense" in the view taken by society. Each boy feels—and herein lies the irony—that his own opinion is in error, either through natural wickedness or lack of maturity, and that if he were a better person or more grown up, he would be able to see that society's view made sense. Consequently, in both stories the narrator's touching humility serves as an ironic commentary on the rest of the world. What more devastating indictment of society could be made than that in it moral goodness is so "unnatural," so out of place, that it can "adjust" only by convincing itself that it is moral error?

Huckleberry Finn is, of course, saturated with this kind of inversion, but nowhere is it so poignantly ironic as in those passages in which Huck ponders the "sinfulness" of his helping the runaway slave Jim, culminating in his heroic decision to save Jim at the price of damnation. Anderson utilizes the same kind of ironic inversion, although, admittedly, in a lower key. The boy *knows* that Negroes are kinder, more trustworthy,

"squarer" than whites, that they have a more sensitive enjoyment of life, that they have a deeper insight into experience; but still he accepts his society's attitude toward "niggers" as immutable: no use in asking his father if he can be a stable boy—only niggers do that. Even as he wishes that he himself "was a nigger" so that he could be around horses more, he admits that "It's a foolish thing to say." The same kind of irony pervades the passages dealing with Henry Rieback's father, a professional gambler. The boy *knows* that Henry's father is "a nice man and generous," but he is also aware of the fact that the respectable fathers don't want their sons to play with Henry. And just as Huck "accepts" the cruel (and to him senseless) precepts of his society as being God ordained and sanctioned, so does the boy concede that "I guess the men know what they are talking about," even though he himself cannot see what Henry's father does for a living has "to do with Henry."⁷ Like Huck, Anderson's boy consistently miscalculates his goodness.

Anderson organizes the world of "I Want to Know Why" around a symbolic dichotomy similar to that used by Twain in *Huckleberry Finn*. Just as Twain structures the largest portion of his novel around the contrast between the "free and easy" life on the raft and the "cramped up and smothery" narrowness of life on the shore, so Anderson contrasts the expansive loveliness of the race track with the pinched restrictiveness of the town. Both race track and raft, each construable as symbols of a life free of cruelty, chicanery, and moral dessication, are described in remarkably similar terms. In each, the quiet descriptions of rich smells, music muted by distance, and far-off images evoke an atmosphere of peace and goodness and beauty. Huck luxuriates in the odors of the "corn-dodgers and buttermilk, and pork and cabbage and greens" Jim cooks on the raft, and Anderson's boy revels in the "lovely . . . smells [of] coffee and . . . bacon frying and pipes being smoked out of doors on a morning" at the track. The boy is moved by the

sounds made as the "niggers sing and giggle" in their sheds as he sits on the fence, just as Huck was by the strains of the occasional "fiddle or song" coming from a nearby craft. From the raft Huck can now and then catch a glimpse of a candle in a cabin window, and the boy can glance into a far-off field and see a solitary figure plowing his field. And for both boys the ecstasy of their lives breaks out in exactly the same kind of inarticulate rapture: "It's lovely to live on a raft," Huck exclaims; "it's lovely to be there," the boy says of the race track.

Moreover, the "lovely life" in both Twain and Anderson is somehow equated with the Negro, who becomes a kind of moral center. The manliness, loyalty, honesty, and decency of Jim has been too well discussed to need elaboration here; it is sufficient to say that Jim is the conscience of *Huckleberry Finn*, the substitute father from whom Huck learns to refine and free those good instincts of his which society has tried to stifle. Although Anderson's boy's relationship with Negroes in general and Bildad in particular is not as explicit as Huck's association with Jim, essentially the same kind of affinity is presented. When the boy has sneaked off to Saratoga, he goes to Bildad, whom he knows he can trust, and who, like Jim, attends to the boy's needs in an uncomplicated and directly kind manner. "Niggers are all right about things like that. They won't squeal on you. Often a white man you might meet, when you had run away from home like that, might appear to be all right and give you a quarter or a half dollar or something, and then go right and give you away. White men will do that, but not a nigger. You can trust them." The general untrustworthiness of whites essayed here has various analogues in *Huckleberry Finn* and reminds one of the passage in which Jim tells Huck that he was "de on'y white genlman dat ever kep' his promise to ole Jim." Moreover, as was indicated above, the Negro, as in Twain's novel, is the index of goodness and truth, toward whom the boy, like Huck to Jim, instinc-

tively gravitates. That there never were two horses from Beckersville like Middlestride and Sunstreak is established as a "fact" because "the niggers said so." The boy is sure that the new colt Strident is going to "lay them all out," although only he and "two or three niggers" think so. When the post-time bugle blows, the boy instinctively runs "to get a place by the fence with the niggers." When the boy is outraged at the filthy spectacle of the brothel, he automatically reverts to his moral frame of reference: "A nigger wouldn't go into such a place." And finally, the boy's agony at having seen his idol, Jerry Tillford, display the same kind of rapture with the prostitute as he had with Sunstreak manifests itself in a tormented desire to have stayed behind with "the niggers and the horses." The boy's trust in, and desire to be with, "the niggers" is precisely the reaction Huck has after his various experiences with the white man's cruelty on shore: "... it *did* seem so good to be free again and all by ourselves [i.e. with Jim] on the big river, and nobody to bother us."

The world outside the race track, like that outside the raft, is rotten with small minds and small cruelties. There, natural pleasures and joys are replaced by joyless jokes (which Huck learns from Jim are nothing but "trash"), the sole fun of which is in the pain or humiliation inflicted. In Anderson's tale, because it is only a short story, one figure, Harry Hellinfinger, the son of the respectable Postmaster, stands for the whole coterie of practical jokers, liars and cheats in Twain. Hellinfinger, who is "too lazy to work, but likes to stand around in the street and get up jokes on boys," and who made the boy very sick by telling him to eat a cigar if he wanted to be stunted enough to be a jockey, is obviously spiritual kin to the river captains who enjoy running down smaller crafts or the town loafers in Twain who set dogs on nursing sows, pour turpentine on stray dogs and then light it, or tie cans to dogs' tails and laughingly watch the animals run themselves to death.

But both boys have to suffer more than small cruelties: there is yet a darker dimension to their experiences. Each boy, against his will and inclination, suffers initiation into realms of moral horror for which he is unprepared—realms which give them both the "fantods" (a word which Anderson probably took from Twain). The whole of Huck's trip down the river is, from one point of view, a "sad initiation" into the stark realities of human corruption.⁸ "Human beings *can* be awful cruel to one another," Huck says in stunned bewilderment. Likewise, Anderson's boy encounters an instance of human corruption that not only bewilders him but spoils his idyllic world as well, much as the presence of the King and Duke corrupts the raft for Huck. And both boys, understandably enough, for neither is in a position to view his initiation as morally curative, wish that they had never encountered the terrible things they have. When Huck sees the boy Buck murdered because of an idiotic feud, much the most terrible experience he has to undergo, he passionately laments his lost innocence: "I wished I hadn't ever come ashore that night to see such things." The boy's reaction to seeing Jerry in the brothel is precisely the same: "I wished I hadn't gone away from the tracks . . ." Neither boy, however, is ever going "to get shut" of his initiative experiences: Huck "dreams about them," and the boy "keeps thinking about it." In both Twain and Anderson there is the same kind of inevitability: you have to come ashore, you have to come to town.

Finally, both boys' experiences culminate in the same kind of isolation and withdrawal. Neither boy, of course, can assess adequately the moral implications of his awareness, but both realize, however dimly, that they are in a new relationship to their environments, that "things are different." Fundamentally, there is no difference between Huck's "light[ing] out for the territory ahead of the rest" and the boy's hanging around the track where now "the air don't taste as

(Continued on page 24)

The Last Time I Saw Mark Twain

Willis C. Pratt, as told to Gertrude Valliere King

It was during one of Mark Twain's frequent bouts with bronchitis that I went to interview him. There had been a dearth of live news for several days. That happens sometimes in newspaper offices. It was two o'clock in the afternoon, and more than half of the members of the Herald's news staff were sitting around waiting for possible assignments. Paul Drane, who ran the "day desk," was searching through a pile of clippings taken from his "future book" in the hope that he might find something worth following up. Evidently he was unsuccessful, for he threw down the clippings with an impatient gesture, and going to the window beside his desk, stood for a few minutes thoughtfully gazing at the crowd on Broadway. Evidently there was no inspiration in that, either. Then, as I was passing his desk:

"How long since you have seen an interview with Mark Twain?"

"Don't remember any; at least, not for several years."

"Do you suppose you could get him to talk about anything?"

"Maybe, for about a dollar a word. Otherwise, the betting is a hundred to one he won't stand for an interview."

"Let's try, anyway. How about a subject? Got an idea?"

(Even editors are careless about their grammar, unless they are writing something.)

"How about politics? There's the municipal election coming on soon."

"Fine. See if he will discuss the possibility of the elimination of the boss in politics."

It was taking a long chance, but I accepted the assignment with that show of enthusiasm which always seems to please the "desk."

I rang the bell of Mr. Clemens's house, the one with the diamond-paned windows, at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Eighth Street. The door was opened by the author's eldest daughter. Yes . . . Mr. Clemens was at home, but had been quite ill. She would

see whether he would receive me. After a few minutes of waiting in the darkened lower hall, I was informed that Mr. Clemens would be pleased to see the Herald reporter.

Miss Clemens led me up the stairs to the door of a room on the second floor, on the Eighth Street side. She knocked, and discreetly retired. A voice, with the familiar drawl which had fascinated Mark Twain audiences all over the world, bid me enter.

"The room was very large, high ceilinged, and not too well lighted by narrow windows with diamond panes. The author was in bed. He lay, bolstered up by two great pillows against the mahogany head board. He wore a white night shirt, and only a sheet covered his slender legs. A bedside table, within easy reach, bore a tobacco jar, two pipes, one larger than the other, matches, a bottle of Scotch whiskey, a siphon of carbonated water, and a tall glass.

"Well, what entitles me to the honor of a visit from the Herald?" The greeting was hearty and encouraging. "Sit down and tell me all about it."

I thought it best to plump it right at him: "The Herald wants to know if you believe it possible to stop political bossism, and if so, how can it be done?"

The bright eyes, under the great bushy brows, glanced at me keenly for a moment, and then turned their gaze to the ceiling. It was a full minute before the humorist looked at me again, and then his only reply was:

"Umph."

Just then my chances for getting an interview didn't look good. I waited. Mr. Clemens drew up his knees, tucked the sheet under them, and reached for the biggest pipe. He jammed it full of tobacco, lighted it, and blew several clouds of smoke, into which he gazed thoughtfully.

"It could be done, but it would be a mighty hard job."

(The odds were better now. Even money I would get a story.)

"Of course, you have noticed that I am in bed?"

I said I thought I had noted that fact.

"Yes, this is my last day here. I have just recovered from my annual attack of bronchitis. This one was a hum-dinger. But I am feeling pretty pert today, and for the first time in three weeks I'm going down to dinner."

Mr. Clemens thereupon poured a very small drink of whiskey into the tall glass, squirted a generous portion of carbonated water into it, and holding it up, said:

"Of course, you don't use this?"

I said, "Of course not."

"Of course not," repeated the humorist, and took a sip of his highball. (The odds against had gone up. There was a soft knock at the door.)

"Come in!" The command was short and sharp.

Miss Clemens entered. She curtsied, respectfully, and then stood very erect, with hands at her sides.

"Mr. ——— (the name has escaped my memory) telephones to ask if Mr. Clemens will be his guest at dinner next Wednesday evening at his home."

After a few puffs at his pipe, Mr. Clemens said:

"Say to Mr. ——— that Mr. Clemens is recovering from an illness, and it will be impossible for him to accept the invitation."

Again, Miss Clemens curtsied, and left the room to transmit her father's rather curt message.

The odds against seemed to me to be way up, and I was about to recall to Mr. Clemens the object of my visit when he suddenly said, pointing to a chair at the foot of his bed:

"Sit over there, where I can see you, and let's talk about getting rid of this boss."

Surreptitiously, I reached in my pocket for my note pad, and was fumbling for my pencil when I saw Mr. Clemens raise a warning finger. Then I remembered that there were authors who shared with some others I had met a prejudice against being taken

down verbatim. I put away the pad, and prepared to listen with both ears.

Blowing clouds of smoke to the ceiling, Mr. Clemens began to talk, between puffs, and with an occasional recrossing of his legs under the sheet. An infrequent sip from the tall glass seemed to help the flow of his ideas. For a full half hour that voice, with its usual drawl entirely absent, poured forth a torrent of political wisdom. The little man, lying there in bed, crossing and recrossing his lean shanks, and changing from one pipe to the other as the one he was puffing became too hot, first drew a word picture of New York's then reigning political boss, Richard Croker. There was not an angle to the man's character, nor an incident of his career either worthy or reprehensible, with which Mr. Clemens appeared unfamiliar. He expressed his appreciation of the fact that political organization of the right brand was a necessity. The machine, through which the various branches of municipal and state government must function, had to have a guiding hand, but a hand that was always open for inspection, never hidden beneath the cloak of the spoiler.

Yes, it was possible to eliminate the political boss, but only under conditions which up to that time seemed to be beyond the power of man or the Almighty to bring about, namely, the complete cooperation of conscientious voters in the selection of their candidates for public office, and in their exercise of the franchise. It was the election day slacker, Mr. Clemens declared, who was responsible for the conditions which had brought into existence the political boss. It was the man who, although fully aware of the results of his dereliction of duty, failed not only to use his power to aid in the selection of representative men as delegates to conventions, but who, through sheer laziness or maybe a disinclination to put on rubbers and carry an umbrella, hung around the house instead of going to the hustings or to the polling places on election day.

About this time I found myself wondering. Was this Mark Twain, the humorist? So far

in the interview he hadn't said a single thing that was funny. Or was it just Samuel L. Clemens, citizen and advocate of good government, deadly serious and genuinely interested in trying to point out a way to better the conditions which had made New York City, and the state of which it was the focal center, a boss-ridden community.

There was much more of it, and finally, with a characteristic motion, as if sweeping the whole subject aside, Mr. Clemens let me know that the interview was over.

I rose to go, and was expressing my appreciation of his friendly response to my request for an interview, when he interrupted me with:

"Wait a minute. I want to tell you something that I wish you would put somewhere in your story, if you think the Herald will print it. But maybe it's no use. You see, having a reputation as a professional humorist works to one's disadvantage. Very often when I am in dead earnest, people insist that I am trying to be funny.

"Summer will soon be here, and with it will come that very serious complaint, dysentery, that carries off hundreds of children and many grown-ups. I know an unfailing remedy for that illness, one that has never failed to cure members of my own family since I learned of it seventeen years ago. Two thick slices of fine ripe watermelon will cure any case of dysentery if the patient can get them down. And do you know what would happen if I should offer to supply Bellevue Hospital with the best Carolina melons, at three cents a car load? Why, they'd have me put up in the psychopathic ward for examination within twelve hours. Now, run along and write your piece."

I turned in my story before six o'clock. I had written a column and a half. Drane looked up as I laid the copy on his desk, and grinned, I thought a little knowingly.

"Did he say *all* this?" he asked, shuffling the seven pages of copy. "You must be a wizard."

The implication was plain, but I let it pass. Ten minutes later, as I was about to

go out for dinner, an office boy told me Mr. Lincoln wanted to see me. I found the city editor of the Herald reading the last page of my story. He glanced at me, as I thought, very keenly.

"This is a very good story. You must have found Mr. Clemens unusually responsive."

"The interview speaks for itself," I replied.

"I want to give this a good display," continued the chief, "and I think in this case we'll have to observe the rule Commodore Bennett has laid down that all interviews with important persons must be O.K.'d by the person giving it."

He handed me the copy, and in no very pleasant frame of mind, I started on my distasteful errand.

I found Mr. Clemens up and dressed for dinner. He received me in a small room on the first floor. He greeted me with a hearty handshake and said:

"Well, well, what are you back for?"

I told him.

"What did you do? Write too good a story?"

I handed him the copy and asked him to run over it and see if I had misquoted him in any particular.

"No," he said, "you read it, and I'll listen."

As I read, the author paced back and forth the length of the rug, his noticeably short arms swinging vigorously as he walked. Along in the middle of the second page I paused and took out my pencil to change a word which I thought to be tautological.

"Hey, there! What are you doing?" Mr. Clemens had stopped short, and was looking at me sharply from under his shaggy brows. I said I wanted to write a word synonymous with one that I had used twice in the same sentence.

"Hold on, there. There is nothing the matter with that word. Will you let me tell you something? I have written a few pieces in my time, and when I find a word that ex-

(Continued on page 23)

Mark Twain Meets a Lady from Finland

Ernest J. Moyné
University of Delaware

In 1894 Mark Twain published in the *North American Review* an article called the "Private History of the 'Jumping Frog' Story." He opened the essay as follows:

Five or six years ago a lady from Finland asked me to tell her a story in our negro dialect, so that she could get an idea of what that variety of speech was like. I told her one of Hopkinson Smith's negro stories, and gave her a copy of *Harper's Monthly* containing it. She translated it for a Swedish newspaper, but by an oversight named me as the author of it instead of Smith. I was very sorry for that, because I got a good lashing in the Swedish press, which would have fallen to his share but for that mistake; for it was shown that Boccaccio had told that very story, in his curt and meager fashion, five hundred years before Smith took hold of it and made a good and tellable thing out of it.¹

The lady from Finland who, by her oversight, exposed Mark Twain to "a good lashing in the Swedish press" was Baroness Alexandra Gripenberg, well-known Finnish author. Born in 1857, of an illustrious Swedish-Finnish family, she was a leader in Finland's woman suffrage and temperance movements.² In 1888 she was a delegate to the international women's congress in Washington, D. C., and afterward she traveled extensively through the United States.

According to *A Half Year in the New World*,³ the account of her visit to America, published after her return to Finland, Alexandra Gripenberg's encounter with Mark Twain was an especially memorable event. She met Twain in Hartford, Connecticut, where three of America's famous authors, Charles Dudley Warner, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Mark Twain, were living at that time. Although the Clemenses were unable to entertain the distinguished Finnish visitor to the United States in their home because

of the illness of one of their daughters, they took particular pains to make her acquaintance.⁴ The meeting occurred in June, 1888, at the home of the Charles Dudley Warners.

When Alexandra Gripenberg arrived at the Warners' at eight o'clock in the evening, she found that Mr. and Mrs. Clemens were already there. She was immediately impressed by Mark Twain's tanned and weather-beaten appearance and by the dense clouds of tobacco smoke which enveloped him. His facial features were sharp and fine; according to our Finnish author, Twain's face was that of a typical prospector, full of countless small and large wrinkles and furrows. His hair was thick, curly, grayish; his penetrating eyes were deep-set; his gestures were abrupt but at the same time slow. His clothes fitted him indifferently as though they knew that their wearer did not care how they looked on him. A brilliant red silk kerchief dangled round his neck in a peculiar manner.⁵

Mark Twain shook hands heartily but in a somewhat clumsy way, and answered very briefly the customary compliments which Alexandra Gripenberg paid him in the process of the introduction. As for Mrs. Clemens, she took the lady from Finland completely by surprise; Baroness Gripenberg felt that almost any woman at all in the world could better be taken for Mark Twain's wife, that is, if one forgets that *les extremes se touchent*. Although Alexandra Gripenberg was herself of Swedish-Finnish nobility, she found Mrs. Clemens, whom she describes as refined and perhaps even intelligent, a bit too aristocratic. She noted that the husband and wife treated each other kindly and that Mrs. Clemens seemed to listen contentedly to even the slightest sacrificial praise placed on the altar of her husband's fame.⁶

Focusing her attention entirely on Mark Twain, Baroness Gripenberg observed that he was in good humor and that the company,

all but herself old friends, inspired him. He sat in a big armchair, in a peculiar shriveled up and twisted position, and puffed briskly at his pipe. Our author notes that smoking is not permitted in America if ladies are present, but that of course Mark Twain had the right to be an exception. At first he sat in silence until the conversation had become livelier, and then he began to talk, slowly in the beginning, mumbling with his pipe between his teeth. Gradually becoming more and more animated, he finally took his pipe out of his mouth, and it disappeared into his gesticulating hand.⁷

During the course of the evening the conversation turned to Negroes, particularly to Frederick Douglass, and to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Harriet Beecher Stowe's sister, who was present, related that Harriet was so hated because of her book that many pastors warned their parishioners to avoid her sinister influence. These clergymen accused her of trying to overthrow God's order of things in the world.

At this point Mark Twain broke in, saying, "I guess that by now they [the ministers] have seen how much she changed our Lord's order in the world. Well Copernicus and Galileo . . . It's the same story over again. But if her sowing sprouted hatred, its harvest has been love. One day I stood on a street corner as Mrs. Stowe was boarding a streetcar. Next to me stood a young man in shabby clothing—obviously he was a tramp, a vagrant. For amusement I asked him, 'Do you know who that lady was?'"

"No," he answered, surprised.

"Well, that was Uncle Tom's Cabin."

"Do you mean that she was Mrs. Stowe?"

"Exactly, Mrs. Stowe herself."

"The man glanced at me a bit suspiciously and then ran after the car and shouted for the driver to stop it. I saw him climb aboard, and, smiling to myself, I went on my way. A few days later I met the same man by chance. He recognized me immediately, tipped his hat, and, eyes gleaming, said, 'Didn't you point out Mrs. Stowe to me, sir? I am very much obliged to you, sir.'

I had the honor to sit next to her and to help her off the car.'"⁸

Commenting on Mark Twain's manner in talking, Alexandra Gripenberg found it similar to that of a Finnish peasant. At the beginning of a story Twain, speaking slowly and eloquently, was very reserved, but by the end of his tale amusement and good-heartedness shone from every wrinkle in his face.

The conversation shifting from Negroes to Negro songs and stories, Mark Twain, in his incomparable way, told the following story in a Virginia dialect. This story is a condensed version of the one by Hopkinson Smith which Mark Twain had read in *Harper's Magazine*.⁹

"A colored cook was just about to send the roast into the dining room when his sweetheart came to see him. The roast was a rare, juicy goose, and the girl cast longing glances at it. Temptation overcame the poor cook. He cut off one of the legs and gave it to his ladylove.

"When the master began to carve the roast at the table, he immediately discovered the fraud. His brow clouded over, but he did not say anything. After dinner he went out into the kitchen and inquired for the chef. The cook approached, shivering with fear.

"Sam, how dare you pilfer the legs from my geese before you send them to the table?"

"I don't understand what you mean, massa."

"I'll teach you to understand. How did you dare cut off the leg of the goose which we had for dinner today?"

"I didn't cut it off, massa."

"Is that so? So you didn't cut it off? How come the goose had only one leg?"

"How—well—presumably it was created that way."

"Like that? You believe, then, that there are one-legged geese?"

"I believe so, massa."

"Well, good. Come with me."

"The master and the cook stepped into
(Continued on page 25)

Mark Twain's "Plug" and "Chaw": An Anecdotal Parallel

Cecil D. Eby, Jr.

Washington and Lee University

After Huckleberry Finn has landed in an Arkansas town, he relates the following anecdote pertaining to the tobacco-chewing habits of the village loafers:

Store tobacco is, flat black plug, but these fellows mostly chaws the natural leaf twisted. When they borrow a chaw they don't generly cut it off with a knife, but they set the plug in between their teeth, and gnaw with their teeth and tug at the plug with their hands till they get it in two— then sometimes the one that owns the tobacco looks mournful at it when it's handed back, and says, sarcastic—

"Here, gimme the *chaw*, and you take the *plug*."¹

Although no Twain scholars appear to have been concerned with a possible source, most would doubtless assume that the verbal exchange had been remembered by Twain from his days on the Mississippi. The anecdote, however, had circulated among the mining camps of Colorado (and perhaps Nevada) for at least twelve years before it was printed in the *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885).

In August of 1873 an excursion of Eastern writers, editors, and naturalists stopped in Denver on their way to Salt Lake City. One of the excursionists, David Hunter Strother ("Porte Crayon"), recorded in his private journal a story very similar to Twain's. It was told to him by a Denver business man, Bela M. Hughes, who presented it with several others as a sample of mining camp humor. This version, more succinct than Twain's, is as follows:

First loafer: "Gimme a chaw of tobacco, will ye?" The miner hands out his plug. Loafer helps himself. Miner says, "Well, mister, if ye'll only gimme that chaw ye may keep the plug."² Although Strother did not use the anecdote

in any subsequent writing which could have been seen by Mark Twain, the two men did meet during the centennial celebration at Philadelphia in 1876.³ That the anecdote might have been exchanged at that time is a possibility, for Strother was a noted raconteur. In any case, the similarity of the two versions, particularly the final lines of each, would indicate either that Twain borrowed from Strother or that the story was already well known in the seventies.

(Notes on page 25)

THE CHALLENGERS

Grace Hollowell

(Inspired by Pasternak's Dr. Zhivago)

Many are the sweepers
The keepers
Of willow-bright halls
Their peace and quietude
Their rhythmic sweeping
Uphold . . . even as they challenge
The willow in behalf of
The king of the whippoorwills
Of all purple-coated ones
Holding the shadowy courts there
From any intruders coming
By way of the green
Holding . . . or dashing out
Into golden palaces
That other swift sheen of light
Cool-simulators of the broken rhythm
Dragging wing . . . leading all other
Intruders away from their own
Intrepid innocent ones
Joining the enemy's columns
Of light . . . to summon to the bar
No other starry-eyed King
But the centuries . . .
To plead there only for more
Singers in limitless praise
To God
For willow-bright halls
To dust.

Restoration of a Howells Letter

Leo P. Coyle

John Carroll University

In 1910 William Dean Howells answered a letter of inquiry from Harriet Taylor Upton, who was seeking background material for her *History of the Western Reserve* (Chicago, 1910).¹ Mrs. Upton quoted portions of Howells' informative and revealing letter, but she took great liberties with its text.

The parts of the letter published by Mrs. Upton represent her version of how the letter might have been written. Mrs. Upton attempted to improve Howells' first-draft phrasing. Although she did not violate Howells' meaning, she restyled the letter by paraphrasing parts of the original, substituting words, initiating phrases, and ignoring, in one instance, a requisite ellipsis. The result is a reprehensible distortion of a highly provocative bit of autobiography.

The unscholarly manner in which Mrs. Upton transcribed Howells' letter is matched only by her irritating tone and her carelessness in handling significant facts: she listed Matthew's Ferry rather than Martins Ferry, Ohio, as Howells' birthplace, and asserted that he became editor, rather than assistant editor, of the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1866. With a rather militant feminism Mrs. Upton commended Howells for his approval of the suffragette movement and then took him to task for his inability to delineate the female character: "The weakest part of his writings are (sic) his woman characters. The author has longed to have him portray a woman with the characteristics of his splendid Welsh grandmother, his own beautiful mother, his sister-in-law, Eliza Howells), who is such a helpmate to his 'brother Joe,' or his own wife—anyone being stronger than his strongest character." (Vol. I, p. 577.)

Mrs. Upton terminated her article on Howells with the mutilated extract from his letter to her dated March 9, 1910. The Howells holograph is now in the manuscript files of the Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio. A complete transcript follows.

Dear Mrs. Upton:

I have always remembered my pleasant day at your house in Warren, and the kindness of your father to my brother; and I would gladly help you if I could in the matter you mention. I was sixteen two months after I came to Jefferson; at nineteen I began journalizing at Columbus. So there could be little to tell of my boyhood in the Reserve. In *My Literary Passions* you will get some notion of our literary life at home in the village, and in *A Boy's Town* (Hamilton, Butler Co. O.) much relating to our family life and to my mother, who was the heart of it; there is something concerning her also in *My Year in a Log Cabin*.

I dearly loved my mother, and whenever I went away from home it was with the foreboding and realization of homesickness which was mainly longing for her. She had a certain great *warmth of mind* which supplied any defect of culture, but for a new country she had been fairly well schooled; she expressed herself from her heart with great natural poetry; and she fully shared the intellectual and spiritual life of my father: together they formed our church and our academy. When we went to live in Jefferson we had nothing but our household stuff and our strong, right wills, and we all worked hard to pay for the printing office and the dwelling house we had bought on credit. We paid for them, but her long hard toil wore my mother out. She did *all* our household work till my sisters grew old enough to help her, and she died at 57 after all was paid for; sometimes we had the "hands" from the office to board, and she worked to save the greater wages they must have been paid otherwise.

I could not tell you all, but I know you will believe we were very happy in the home which she knew how to create for us. An inexpressible tenderness, a devout honor for her fills me as I speak of her. I could not wish to have had another sort of mother;

(Continued on page 15)

Mark Twain and Ring Lardner

Howard W. Webb, Jr.

Southern Illinois University

Ring Lardner, who was born in 1885, the year following the publication of *Huckleberry Finn*, was often compared to Mark Twain. Sherwood Anderson, for example, in one of the first articles to accord Lardner serious recognition, praised him as "one who cares about the words of our American speech," and suggested that perhaps he was "being another Mark Twain and working in secret on his own Huck Finn." In 1924, Edmund Wilson, reviewing *How to Write Short Stories*, stated his belief that Lardner "would seem to come closer than anyone else among living American writers to possessing the combination of qualities that made *Huckleberry Finn* a masterpiece." After Lardner's death, a number of the obituary notices in newspapers and magazines again made the comparison; and Heywood Broun asserted that "Over Jordan his mansion will be on the street with Mark Twain . . ."¹

For many reasons these comparisons were inevitable. Like Twain, Lardner began as a journalist and was at first regarded as little more than a very good "funny man." Like Twain, he eventually received recognition as an artist of serious purpose. Also, again like Twain, he looked upon mankind with a critical eye and his viewpoint changed from one of amusement to one of bitterness and despair. Both men hated cruelty and pain and both were severely restrained in their treatment of sex. Finally, Lardner was the first writer after Mark Twain to use American speech—to use it with imagination, wit, accuracy, and effectiveness—for the purpose of literary creation. Despite these similarities, however, Ring Lardner was not a twentieth-century Mark Twain, nor did he ever manage to write a *Huckleberry Finn*. His background, the sources of his interest in language, the nature and function of the vernacular in his writings—all these place him in marked contrast with Twain.

This contrast becomes clear at once when

we consider the environments from which these writers came. Mark Twain knew the colorful life of Hannibal, Missouri, a small town where, as he said, "Everybody knew everybody, and was affable to everybody, and nobody put on any visible airs."² There, mixing as he did with all ranks of society, from slaves to F.F.V.'s, he presumably formed the democratic attitudes which inform his work; there he learned to judge others, not by their social status or their grammar, but by their humanity. Ring Lardner, too, knew the life of a small town, Niles, Michigan; but Edmund Wilson was quite wrong when he said that Lardner had had "the freedom of the modern West no less than Mark Twain did of the old."³ Niles never had the vividness of pre-Civil War Hannibal, nor did Lardner have the freedom Twain had known. The Lardners were a wealthy and cultured family, one of the most exclusive in Niles, in fact; and young Ring's contact outside the family circle were extremely limited (he did not even attend public school until he was twelve).⁴ I do not mean to suggest that Lardner was, then or later, undemocratic, but he did not have the liberal boyhood experience Twain had had. Mark was the young commoner; Ring was the young aristocrat.

A similar difference may be seen in the sources of the interest both writers displayed in the American speech. Twain's interest surely had its roots in the language he heard and used in Hannibal in the climactic years of what H. L. Mencken calls "the Period of Growth" of the "American language," a period when "the voice of America began to take on its characteristic tone-colors, and the speech of America began to differentiate itself unmistakably from the speech of England."⁵ Another source of interest, as DeVoto and others have made clear, was the tradition of American humor, which Twain encountered as a printer and reporter. Finally, his apprenticeship in the rough-and-

tumble journalism of Virginia City and San Francisco surely taught him much about the flexibility of language.

Only in this last respect are the sources of Lardner's interest allied with those of Twain. From the relaxed conventions of the sports-writing school in which he learned his trade, Lardner too learned something about the flexibility of language. But he took with him to that school a heritage far different from the one Twain had carried to Virginia City. Lardner's interest in American speech doubtless had its roots in the language he heard in Niles, but this was not the language he used himself. Within the confines of the family circle, he learned "correct" English, and he regarded any deviation from that standard as comic, and a sign of inferior social status. In the Lardner home "incorrect" English was a vehicle of fun and games; and the literary fare consisted of the classics of English and American literature, not the disreputable humorists. In 1925, one critic insisted that Lardner belonged in that "long line of practitioners, from Sam Slick through Artemus Ward, Josh Billings, and Mark Twain";⁶ but nothing in his writings or in his few comments on humor suggests the influence of American humor in general or Mark Twain in particular. In fact, asked once to identify the greatest humorist America had produced, he replied:

"Well, I wouldn't consider Mark Twain our greatest humorist. I guess that George Ade is. Certainly he appeals to us more than Mark Twain does because he belongs to our own time. He writes of the life we are living, and Mark Twain's books deal with the life which we know only by hearsay. I suppose my forebears would say that Mark Twain was a much greater humorist than George Ade.

"But I never saw one of Mark Twain's characters, while I feel that I know every one about whom George Ade writes. You see, I didn't travel along the Mississippi in Mark Twain's

youth, so I don't know his people."

When the interviewer asked whether he admired *Huckleberry Finn*, Lardner acknowledged that he did, but said that he liked Tarkington's *Penrod* better. I've known Booth Tarkington's boys," he added, "and I've not known those of Mark Twain. Mark Twain's boys are tough and poverty-stricken and they belong to a period very different from that of our own boys."⁷ Such comments as these virtually eliminate the possibility of any influence; for, even allowing for some distortion on the part of the interviewer, a more inept appraisal of Mark Twain and his masterpiece is difficult to imagine. Thus, we may conclude that Lardner's interest in American speech had its source, not in a native literary tradition, but in a social attitude which he learned at home.

Still another contrast between the two writers appears when we consider the nature and function of American speech as it exists in their writings. Twain's feeling for the vernacular is affectionate. The vivid, figurative language of Simon Wheeler and Huck Finn is a poetic medium, the easy, earthy speech of people who live close to nature and respond strongly and positively to experience. Lardner's attitude toward the vernacular he employs is scornful. The colorless, literal language of Jack Keefe, of the old man of "The Golden Honeymoon," and others is incapable of poetry; it is the flat, inhibited speech of the unimaginative provincial or urban man who is acutely conscious of himself but utterly insensitive to the life around him. An exception to this generalization is furnished by such a character as the narrator of *The Big Town*, whose point of view is essentially identical with Lardner's; but the effectiveness of the narrator's speech lies largely in its citified and unpoetic wisecracks ("The only thing young about him was his teeth and his clothes"; "he gave her a look that you could pour on a waffle").⁸

Twain's affection and Lardner's scorn are also apparent in the functions to which the

vernacular was put in their writings. Twain utilized it to create characters, to put them living on the page; and in rendering their speech he strove to be as accurate and realistic as possible. Lardner utilized it to create and simultaneously to satirize characters—our reasons for laughing at Huck are quite distinct from our reasons for laughing at Jack Keefe—and while his ear for the common speech was remarkably sure, his transcription of it was selective and stylized rather than realistic. Also, Lardner's objectivity was greater and more consistent; no Colonel Sherburns obtrude themselves into his stories. But neither, we must remember, did Lardner ever write a *Huckleberry Finn*.

There are many other differences between these two writers. We might note, for example, the rich comedy and the wonderful fantasy in Twain's work, as opposed to the more insistent satire and the large bulk of delightful nonsense that is to be found in Lardner's writings. We might also consider the many facets of himself Twain revealed in his writing and the truly remarkable lack of self-revelation in the work of Lardner. But enough has already been said to indicate that the resemblance between the lives and works of Mark Twain and Ring Lardner is not nearly so impressive and revealing as the contrast.

One more point, however, should be made. Twain and Lardner have exerted a common influence on modern American prose. Twain has come to stand in the relationship of godfather to that group of American writers—Robinson and Frost, the Imagists, Pound and Eliot, and Gertrude Stein—who in the early years of this century turned away from the established literary traditions and the conventions of language. While he seems to have been unaware of this revolt, Lardner, whose first stories appeared in 1914, was nonetheless a part of it; his use of the common speech was a tributary to that stream which Hemingway and others were to swell to a flood. Indeed, Hemingway himself, before he met Anderson or Pound or Stein and before his well-known comment on

Huckleberry Finn, was an "early imitator" of Ring Lardner's style.⁹ More recently, such writers as Mark Harris, the author of *The Southpaw* and *Bang the Drum Slowly*, and J. D. Salinger, the author of *The Catcher in the Rye*, have testified to the continuing influence of Twain and Lardner.

No one would deny that Twain was the greater writer. But no one should insist that Lardner was merely an unfulfilled latter-day disciple; clearly, he was his own man. Different, however, as they may have been, the creator of Huck Finn and the creator of Jack Keefe bequeathed a common legacy to American literature. Lardner's mansion may not be on the same street with Twain's, but it well may be just around the corner.

1. Sherwood Anderson, "Four American Impressions," *New Republic*, XXXII (Oct. 11, 1922), 171-73; Edmund Wilson, "Mr. Lardner's American Characters," *Dial*, LXXVII (July, 1924), 69; Heywood Brown, quoted in "Ring Lardner—Interpreter of Life," *Literary Digest*, CXVI (Oct. 14, 1933), 19.
2. Mark Twain, *Autobiography* (New York, 1924), I, 120.
3. Wilson, p. 69.
4. See Donald Elder, *Ring Lardner* (New York, 1956), pp. 9-35.
5. H. L. Mencken, *The American Language* (New York, 1936), p. 133.
6. Henry Longan Stuart, "Mr. Lardner Burlesques America," *New York Times Book Review*, Apr. 19, 1925, p. 1.
7. "Three Stories a Year Are Enough For a Writer," *New York Times Magazine*, Mar. 25, 1917, p. 44.
8. *The Big Town* (New York, 1921; reissued New York, 1925), pp. 24, 149.
9. The quoted phrase is from Ernest Hemingway, "In Defense of Dirty Words," *Esquire*, II (Sept., 1935), 158D; regarding Lardner's early influence on Hemingway, see Charles A. Fenton, *The Apprenticeship of Ernest Hemingway* (New York, 1954), pp. 22-26.

HOWELLS LETTER

(Continued from page 12)

I do not believe there was ever a better woman. It is more than thirty years since she died, but I still dream of her among the living who visit me in sleep, and I dream of her often.

I cannot think of anything more to tell you, at present.

Yours sincerely,
W. D. Howells

1. This three volume work was compiled chiefly by Mrs. Upton H. G. Cutler and a staff of "leading citizens" helped in the preparation of certain sketches.

My First Book

Sir Philip Gibbs

As a boy of eighteen, I wrote a number of fairy stories for a famous children's magazine called *Little Folks*. That was when I was a beginner in the publishing house of Cassell and Company, who had their offices in La Belle Sauvage Yard, named after the Red Indian girl Pocahontas. This was in Ludgate Yard, London, and here in Elizabethan days the Lord Chamberlain's players used to act to the "groundlings" and the galleries around the inn yard.

Every morning I used to advance to this office in a frock coat and tall hat, then the recognized costume of respectable young gentlemen. Curiously enough, I owed my first advancement in life to the study of German. I was reading a novel in that language—instead of doing my work—when a voice spoke over my shoulder:

"Do you read German?"

"I try to."

"Oh, that's interesting. Come up and see me one day."

I turned round and saw a tall, fair-haired man with the bluest eyes I have ever seen in a human face. I asked a colleague about him and was told in an awed voice that he was our supreme Boss, by name of Arnold-Forster, and at that time Minister-for-War.

I went up five flights of stairs to see him one day in a very big room, and shortly afterwards rose very high in the world—five flights high—when I sat in that room with the tremendous title of educational editor, under the direction of Arnold-Forster himself.

He was my kind patron, and encouraged by him, I compiled two school books, to which, most generously, he contributed prefaces. But I don't count one of those as my first book, not being addressed to a public of adult age. My first work of general interest was published week by week, before it reached book form, in a number of provincial newspapers. How I came to write it was due to one sentence in a letter I wrote answering an advertisement for an editor of a

literary syndicate in the north of England. The sentence was as follows:

"As William Pitt once said: 'I am guilty of the damnable crime of being a young man.'"

Now it happened that the owners of the literary syndicate were three young men named Tillotson, and my quotation appealed to them so strongly that I was given the job among all other applicants.

So there I was in the most hideous town in England as a literary editor who had to select stories and articles—many of them by famous writers—for syndication in the provincial press.

It was interesting work, but not well paid. To earn a bit extra, now having a beautiful wife, I wrote a weekly article of my own under the terrific title of "Knowledge Is Power."

Like Sir Francis Bacon, I took "all knowledge to be my province." I wrote about the great masters of literature. I dealt with philosophy, ethics, history, and many aspects of life. Since boyhood I had been a great reader, but I must confess that I had to "mug up" many of the subjects upon which I wrote with apparent authority—just one week before the article appeared.

These articles had a wide success in the provincial press, and I received a great number of letters. Many of them came from Canada, Australia, Africa, and other far places. This was due to my articles appearing in *The Weekly Scotsman*, for wherever a Scot had planted himself, he was followed by that weekly paper. My essays on Shakespeare, Dr. Johnson, Sir Walter Scott, and others appealed to these Scottish exiles, and I had an interesting correspondence with them. Many of these letters from lonely people in the far places of the earth were written as though to a personal friend and told their own adventures and way of life.

I felt rather a fraud at times because my correspondents assumed that I was a man

(Continued on page 17)

Mark Twain and the Man from Maine

Cyril Clemens

Anyone who has looked attentively into the pages of Merle Johnson's *Bibliography of Mark Twain* must have been struck by a curious fact. After the publication of *The Celebrated Jumping Frog* in New York in 1867 and continuing down to (and including) the publication of *A Tramp Abroad* in 1880, all of Mark Twain's major works, including *Tom Sawyer* in 1876, were published in Hartford, Connecticut, by Elisha Bliss, who "traded" under the name of the American Publishing Company, whereas beginning in 1885 with the publication of *Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain's books were published in New York City by Charles L. Webster & Company — Charles Webster being the husband of Mark Twain's niece Annie Moffatt and (as a publisher) completely under the thumb of Mark Twain himself. But in between these two series—between the books published 1869-1880 in Hartford and the books published after 1885 by his nephew—there is a brief hiatus. This gap is filled in Merle Johnson's list by three titles. These three books were published, not in Hartford and not in New York, but in Boston; and they were published not by friend or nephew but by a man from Maine. The story of how *The Stolen White Elephant* (1882), *The Prince and the Pauper* (1882), and *Life on the Mississippi* (1883) came to be published in Boston has never been told in any detail, chiefly because until 1959 nothing had been published about James Ripley Osgood, the man from Maine—nothing, at least, in book-length form.

Fortunately, before the centennial of Mark Twain's beginning as a published author arrives, this omission has been corrected. Late in 1959 a full-length biography of his Boston publisher at last appeared: *The Rise and Fall of James Ripley Osgood* by Carl J. Weber (Waterville, Maine: Colby College Press, 1959; \$8). In this book Mark Twain's association with James R. Osgood is given careful treatment, with a special chapter about *Life on the Mississippi* and about Osgood's trip down the river with

Mark a year before the publication of the famous book.

There are also accounts of Mark Twain's trip with Osgood to Montreal, and of trips and meetings in New York and Boston, of their association as members of The Kinsmen club, and of Osgood's attempts—some successful and others failures—to play critic and literary adviser to Mark.

The author of this belated biography of James Osgood is Carl J. Weber, professor emeritus of English at Colby College, who has appeared in these pages on various occasions in the past, in connection with Thomas Hardy, A. E. Housman, Henry James, and various other authors. His biography of Osgood has an interesting chapter on Charles Dickens, with whom Osgood travelled during the novelist's American tour in 1867-68, and many pages devoted to the publisher's contacts with William Dean Howells, Henry James, Bret Harte, Walt Whitman, and others.

Osgood often visited Mark Twain in Hartford, and after the publisher's death in London (in 1892), where he is buried, Mark Twain remarked, with affectionate reminiscence, "Osgood was a lovely fellow."

MY FIRST BOOK

(Continued from page 16)

of great learning and wisdom, whereas I was a fair-faced youth, grabbing at knowledge from week to week. May God forgive me after more than fifty years!

One day there came into my room an author well known in his time named Cutcliffe Hyne. When he saw me, he burst out laughing and laughed until the tears came into his eyes.

"What's the joke?" I asked, slightly embarrassed.

I was the joke. For months he had been reading my "Knowledgge Is Power" and had the idea that I was a venerable man with a long white beard. My extremely youthful appearance struck him as being very comical.

A Connecticut Yankee as a Revolutionary Document

John DeWitt McKee

Much has been said about Mark Twain's final ability to achieve perspective in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. The same thing might be said — and with the same amount of truth — about *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. And the qualification must be made, because Mark Twain was never able to achieve true objectivity. In a sense Huckleberry Finn on the Mississippi and Hank Morgan in Camelot are both Mark Twain. As Bernard DeVoto believes, this strange man could not objectify his fiction, and, paradoxically, he could not make the direct revelation of autobiography.¹

But if Mark Twain is a personal and private writer in that his viewpoint character is almost always, in essence, himself, he is also universal in that he is hardly ever speaking only of America in the nineteenth century or, as in *Joan*, of France of the fifteenth century, or of England of the sixth century; he is speaking of and to mankind. For that reason a study of *A Connecticut Yankee* as a revolutionary document should be a rewarding one.

Bernard DeVoto has interpreted *Huckleberry Finn* as a social criticism, or at least as having social implications concerning America, and others have followed him in that interpretation.² If this interpretation is valid, and I think it is, then the evaluation of *A Connecticut Yankee* as a social document is at least equally so. John R. Hoben makes a good case for Twain's feud with Matthew Arnold and his increasing Anglophobia as the catalyst which turned *A Connecticut Yankee* into a scathingly anti-British harangue, and, more than incidentally, into a much better book than it might otherwise have been.³ But, granting the Anglophobia, and granting the need of some such catalyst as Arnold's superior attitude toward America, granting even the prevailing American penchant for twisting the lion's tail, *A Connecticut Yankee in King*

Arthur's Court is far more than a blast at England, far more than a blast at the twin anachronisms of Church and State. This book, written at the peak of Twain's power, at the edge of the long descent, is a revolutionary novel.

Mr. DeVoto quotes a letter from Edmund Clarence Stedman to Mark Twain:

Some blasted fool will surely jump up and say that Cervantes polished off chivalry long ago, etc. After a time he'll discover, perhaps, that you are going at the *still existing* radical principles or fallacies which made "chivalry possible once and servility and flunkeyism and tyranny possible now."⁴

And Mark Twain himself says, in his preface to *A Connecticut Yankee*:

The ungentle laws and customs touched upon in this tale are historical, and the episodes which are used to illustrate them are also historical. It is not pretended that these laws and customs existed in England in the sixth century; no, it is only pretended that inasmuch as they existed in English and other civilizations of far later times, it is safe to consider that it is no libel upon the sixth century to suppose them to have been in practice in that day also. One is quite justified in inferring that whatever one of these laws and customs was lacking in that remote time, its place was competently filled by a worse one.⁵

Twain's attacks on the Catholic Church "as the begetter of slavery, the enfranchisement of privilege and corruption and injustice, the source of cruelty and superstition and intolerance . . ." ⁶ have long been noted; and his bitter laughter at the traditions of kingship and the chivalric tradition—which has come down today to empty titles and guided tours through the feudal castles—is part of the explicit satire of the book.

But it is the institution itself which is evil; the individual may be good or evil him-

self, regardless of the institution. Hence before Merlin puts Hank Morgan into his thirteen-century sleep, the Yankee machinist has grown to like King Arthur, and to respect him. Hence there is a kindly priest to take the child of the condemned young mother. "Law is intended to mete out justice," the priest says. "Sometimes it fails. This cannot be helped. We can only grieve, and be resigned, and pray for the soul of him who falls unfairly by the arm of the law, and that his fellows may be few. The law sends this poor young thing to death—and it is right. But another law had placed her where she must commit her crime or starve with her child—and before God that law is responsible for both her crime and her ignominious death!"⁷

Thus it is not the king nor the priest who is at fault; it is the institution, the State, which moves stupidly and often with unknowing and uncaring cruelty, and the Church, which abets the state by perpetuating and encouraging superstition.

We see King Arthur as a man when he goes on his tour in disguise, and he is a good man. The only priest we see is a good man, caught in the toils of the institution he serves. The same comparison is made between individual common men and humanity in the mass. Marco is a simple, good man. Dowley, the smith, overpays his help at the risk of the law. The king himself, at the risk of the Church's displeasure and of his own life, helps Hank in the smallpox hut. But humanity in the mass is as evil as the institutions it erects. Mobs make picnics out of hangings and run along beside the tumbril shouting obscenities and singing ribald songs. Pilgrims on a holy quest watch the whipping of a slave girl and comment on "the expert way in which the whip was handled."

Hank Morgan's attitude toward mankind fluctuates continually between man's innate goodness, a romantic faith in education, and a conviction that the human race is damned. When Marko offers to go to the gallows rather than report his relatives for killing

the lord and burning the castle, Hank says:

There it was, you see. A man *is* a man, at bottom. Whole ages of abuse and oppression cannot crush the manhood clear out of him . . . Yes, there is plenty good enough material for a republic in the most degraded people that ever lived—even the Russians; plenty of manhood in them—even in the Germans—if one could but force it out of its timid and suspicious privacy, to overthrow and trample in the mud any throne that ever was set up, and any nobility that ever supported it . . .⁸

When he first discovered that he was in the sixth century, Hank reconciled himself to it this way:

. . . If . . . it was really the sixth century, all right, I didn't want any softer thing: I would boss the whole country inside of three months; for I judged I would have the start of the best-educated man in the kingdom by a matter of thirteen hundred years and upward . . .⁹

In another place, he says, "Training — training is everything; training is all there is to a person. We speak of nature; it is folly; there is no such thing as nature; what we call by that misleading name is merely heredity and training . . ."¹⁰ Yet only a few lines further on, he says, "And as for me, all that I think of in this plodding and pilgrimage, this pathetic *drift between the eternities*,¹¹ is to look out and humbly live a pure and high and blameless life, and save that one microscopic item in me that is truly *me*: the rest may land in Sheol for all I care."¹²

The only banner around which the novel finds a kind of unity is the banner of revolution. The human race may be damned; nothing ultimately may be done for this sorry creature, man; but at the very least a revolution might ameliorate some of his suffering while he drifts pathetically between eternities. Stedman focused the importance of this aspect of the book when he spoke of "tyranny . . . now." Twain was

beating no dead horse when he railed against the monarchy of the sixth century. Witness the references to Russia and to Germany in the passages already quoted, and Twain's insistence on a broad application of the story in the passage quoted from the preface.

The revolutionary aspect of the novel begins with Hank Morgan's analysis of the power of the Catholic Church, an analysis which continues throughout the book, but is at its clearest when Hank compares the power of the king, who is a slave to the Church, with his own intellectual and political powers as The Boss—The Boss who is outside the power of the Church. It is clearer, too, in his comparison of the hereditary power of the nobility and of his own power, drawn from the people.¹³ "Unlimited power is the ideal thing when it's in safe hands," Hank says. The trouble is, the only safe hands are perfect hands, and the only perfect hands are the hands of God. Among necessarily imperfect men, Hank concludes, "an earthly despotism is not only a bad form of government, it is the worst form of government."¹⁴

Although in the end he sees them as slaves of their own apathy, everywhere Hank Morgan is on the side of the people. Of the French Revolution, he says:

There were two "Reigns of Terror," if we would but remember it and consider it; the one wrought murder in hot passion, the other in heartless cold blood; the one lasted mere months, the other lasted a thousand years; the one inflicted death on ten thousand persons, the other upon a hundred millions . . . What is the horror of swift death by the ax compared with lifelong death from hunger, cold, insult, cruelty, and heartache?¹⁵

Did Mark Twain take up the clothes symbol from Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* and cut it to fit the pattern of his own democratic doctrine? From the internal evidence, it would seem so.

You see, my kind of loyalty was loyalty to one's country, not to its institu-

tions, or its office-holders . . . Institutions are extraneous, they are [the country's] mere clothing, and clothing can wear out, become ragged, cease to be comfortable, cease to protect the body from winter, disease and death. To be loyal to rags, to shout for rags, to die for rags—that is the loyalty of unreason, it is pure animal; it belongs to monarchy, was invented by monarchy, let monarchy keep it. . . . The citizen who thinks he sees that the commonwealth's political clothes are worn out, and yet holds his peace and does not agitate for a new suit is disloyal; he is a traitor . . .¹⁶

As always in *A Connecticut Yankee*, Mark Twain's attack here is a double-barrelled one, and he soon lets go the other barrel at the Church in the matter of political liberty:

Concentration of political power is bad; and an Established Church is only a political machine; it was invented for that; it is nursed, cradled, preserved for that; it is an enemy to human liberty, and it does no good which it could not do better in a split-up and scattered condition . . .¹⁷

Hank Morgan could work nineteenth-century magic for sixth-century England. He could build it factories and shot-towers and schools, but he could not give it liberty; for that there had to be a revolution. The monarchy and the Church and their evils had grown too deeply into the soil of England to be rooted out in any other way; and the people, the soil upon which this corruption had fed itself for so many centuries, were inured to the corruption. The damned, as Mr. DeVoto says, had accepted their damnation.

" . . . all gentle cant and philosophizing to the contrary notwithstanding," Hank Morgan says, "no people in the world ever did achieve their freedom by goody-goody talk and moral suasion: it being immutable law that all revolutions that succeed must *begin* in blood, whatever may answer afterward."¹⁸

(Continued on page 24)

Joseph Conrad and *Huckleberry Finn*

Frederick R. Karl

Although Joseph Conrad's "Youth" and "Heart of Darkness" were written almost contemporaneously, the latter, published serially in February-April, 1899, only five months after the first story, shows a literary development and an awareness of ideas completely foreign to its shorter and slighter predecessor. Lengthy discourse has been transmuted into apt image, vapid description into muscular prose, and unabashed sentimentality into objective point of view. From "Youth" to "Heart of Darkness" is indeed a step from youth to maturity as Conrad was aware. "Heart of Darkness," he said, is "anything but the mood of wistful regret, of reminiscent tenderness," or the memory of romantic youth.

To relate Conrad's development between the two stories to another author at another time, it is not unlike the passage from *Tom Sawyer* (1876) to *Huckleberry Finn* (1884) in Mark Twain's canon. The first is a study of a boy's growth which despite its preoccupation with the darker images of a youthful imagination is nevertheless a relatively light-hearted work. But its sequel, *Huckleberry Finn*, is a profound projection from a playful boy's world into an adult world of retributive and self-seeking evil. Dangers no longer lurk in the imagination but exist in the realities of the social world. From *Tom Sawyer* to *Huckleberry Finn*, there is implied a process of maturity which consists in confronting the real world. Twain, like Conrad with "Youth" and "Heart of Darkness," moved from a youthful tone of "wistful regret" and "reminiscent tenderness" toward a larger and more mature view.

The comparison is not fortuitous. Behind *Huckleberry Finn* and "Heart of Darkness" there is a basis of similarity and a general kinship of idea, although the methods of each writer are frequently dissimilar. Central to both works is the passage along the rivers Mississippi and Congo respectively, and the relationship between the river and

the shore. Using the freedom of the river as a vast symbol, Twain opposed it to the deceit and treachery of the shore. Built on a series of contrasts, the structure of *Huckleberry Finn* is kept in balance by the very undercurrent that maintains the balance of the raft—the rhythm of the river itself—a rhythm that conveys the *tempi* of the novel. Conrad's Congo does not have the purifying qualities of the Mississippi, but it does lead up to and away from the stagnant jungle, the river Styx leading into an Inferno, and by comparison with the shore it is less tainted, less evil. We must remember that it is on the river that Kurtz finally recognizes and voices the horror of his inhumanity.

When Huck grows toward maturity and responsibility, an entire society is undergoing the rites of baptism, either gaining a sense of right conduct or suffering the loss of heart. As a view of society, *Huckleberry Finn* is a sobering picture, no less than "Heart of Darkness," whose powerful images of deterioration have become insistently relevant to the twentieth century. As studies in human degradation surrounded by the possibilities of regeneration, both works symbolize an era.

The appropriateness of the epigraph to the volume *Youth*, containing both Conrad stories, a quotation from Grimm's *Fairy Tales*: ". . . But the dwarf answered: No; something human is dearer to me than the wealth of all the world," is nowhere more apparent than in Conrad's study of the loss of heart and its terrible consequences: specifically, the loss of responsible heart in Kurtz. The entire story is structured like an imagist poem on a series of trenchant images whose cumulative effect is to provide a frame for Kurtz, whose loss of human responsibility is the center of the work. More than fifty specifically defined images of a certain uniformity, images that on first sight may seem tangential to the progress of the story, follow one another as an

organic part of the narrative. From the first description of the fog overhanging the sombre Thames, Conrad furnishes the imagistic tone as well as the verbal premonition of what is to come. The Thames region—characterized in the days of Roman conquest as having “cold, fog, tempests, disease, exile, and death . . . in the air, in the water, in the bush”—is the Congo of the present day, that “immense snake uncoiled.” The account of Marlow’s adventure in the Brussels Trading Company Office, where he goes for his assignment, prefaces the description of the Congo; the office, as “arid as a desert,” is inhabited by two women, “one fat and the other slim, [who] sat on straw-bottomed chairs, knitting black wool.” While guarding the gates of Hell through which Marlow is seeking entrance, these two Parcae are feverishly knitting the fate of the Congo expedition.

When Marlow finally embarks for the Congo, the barren, heartless tone is immediately set by the futile landing of the soldiers and clerks in “what looked like a God-forsaken wilderness. . . . They were just flung out there, and on we went.” Then soon after, Marlow remarks the sterile French gunboat: “There wasn’t even a shed there [on shore], and she was shelling the bush. . . . In the empty immensity of earth, sky, and water, there she was, incomprehensible, firing into a continent.” The main images of the story are concerned with death and decay and futility, with metallic and inflexible substances, with cold and hard stuffs which resist human manipulation, the unresisting matter of machinery weighed down by decay and rust. T. S. Eliot’s contemplated use of the epigraph—“Mistah Kurtz, he dead”—for *The Waste Land* and his subsequent use of it for “The Hollow Men” explain the poems as much as the poems explain what Conrad had in mind.

Following the journey deeper into the Congo, we meet in quick succession the shelling of the jungle, a hanged Swede, houses with iron roofs wasted and devastated, a rusting boiler, an undersized railway-truck

lying on its back with its wheels in the air, decaying machinery, a stack of rusty nails, and several other like images. Suddenly projected onto this scene of decomposition are the indifferent and moribund savages working until they drop on a project they can never understand, no less fulfill. Wasted shades settled in the corners of hell, they convey the same sense of personal hopelessness and futility that Dante conceived for the dwellers of the *Inferno*, those other representatives of the nadir of spirit and vitality. Conrad describes them as unearthly, nearer dead than alive:

Black shapes crouched, lay, sat between the trees, leaning against the trunks, clinging to the earth, half coming out, half effaced within the dim light, in all attitudes of pain, abandonment, and despair. . . . They were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing earthly now—nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation, lying confusedly in the greenish gloom.

And:

Near the same tree two more bundles of acute angles sat with their legs drawn up. One, with his chin propped on his knees, stared at nothing, in an intolerable and appalling manner: his brother phantom rested its [sic] forehead, as if overcome with a great weariness; and all about others were scattered in every pose of contorted collapse, as in some picture of a massacre or a pestilence.

Among these shades of once-vigorous men, the pathological Kurtz is a god-devil who has power, intelligence, and loyal followers—all but morality and responsible humanity. Marlow has descended into the underworld and found a modern god, one, however, emasculated of Christian feeling, a mechanical man driven by strength of will alone. The presence of images rooted in hard and mechanical contrivances, extending even to the natives themselves, is an acute prefiguration of Kurtz himself, who is as corrupt and

as metallic as the rotting railroad car and the decaying machinery. The light and dark imagery, the progression from civilization into darkness as the boat proceeds deeper into the Congo, the loss of humanity implicit in Kurtz's activities—all these point to a universal struggle played out upon the lower depths of man's behavior, an Inferno in form and substance.

Kurtz's own ivory top defines graphically his greed whereby he becomes part of the very substance he has coveted. Kurtz's ferociously acquisitive nature is trenchant comment on European imperialism which changed him from a bounding idealist into a diabolic and nihilistic intransigent who, while sacrificing human solidarity and sympathy, seeks his triumph in brutish degradation. As a predatory statesman, Kurtz is like a god, adored, approached by his disciples on all fours, a "pitiful Jupiter" whose physical powers have been stripped but whose spiritual sway remains strong. A vaporish and pale mass of willful power, he dreams of the infinite even while he draws his last breath. Kurtz's quest is for materialistic power, and his role, like that of a priest officiating at a Black Mass, is to play a devilish diety. Not the least of Kurtz's devoted following is his "savage and superb" pagan goddess, whose presence as a symbol of the "fecund and mysterious life" of the Congo is a worthy counterpart of her once-powerful idol.

In Conrad's presentment of a modern world in which material image is one with human image, we have a symbolic re-creation of human greed that finds kinship with Twain's own view of a money-worshipping nineteenth-century America. Conrad's story, with its aversion to the amoral acquisitive spirit and with its dramatization of the horrors inherent in the loss of responsibility, closes out the nineteenth century with a resounding shriek of moral disapproval. Even though Kurtz at the moment of death recognizes the infinite horrors of his inhumanity, his moral victory is no easy remedy for what he had perpetrated. And

even though Marlow's journey up the Congo ends in his returning with a repentant devil, the memory of this redeemed soul must be preserved by a lie. Like Twain, Conrad recognized that civilized society, unable to accept unadorned reality, must romanticize its idols under a cloak of lies: that civilization *per se* is a commitment to untruth. All that remained to the spiritually exhausted Marlow was the faith of Kurtz's fiancée, rooted as she was not in reality but in illusions; and yet, ironically, her faith, like Huck's at the end of Twain's novel, remained the only light under a sky "that seemed to lead into the heart of an immense darkness."

LAST TIME I SAW MARK TWAIN

(Continued from page 8)

presses what I mean I use it twice, and maybe three times, in the same sentence."

I took his advice and went on reading. When I had finished, with no further interruption from him, Mr. Clemens stopped in front of me.

"Did you take notes while I was talking?" he asked.

"You know that I did not. I was afraid you would quit on me."

He chuckled at that.

"Well, your story is all right. Here, let me have it." And taking the sheaf of copy and my pencil, he wrote at the top of the first page:

"O.K. S.L.C."

"There, show 'em that." And then, giving me an affectionate pat on the shoulder: "Do you know, my boy, I think we'd get along first rate together."

The little man with the bushy white hair, the broad, high forehead, and shaggy brows stood in his dinner coat on the steps of his home and waved me a good-bye. I never saw him again.

It may be unnecessary to add that my story, watermelon cure and all, went upstairs early that evening, marked:

"MUST. RUN FULL. FIRST PAGE."

SHERWOOD ANDERSON

(Continued from page 5)

good" and the joy of "looking at horses" has been spoiled. Experience has set them apart.

I believe that the parallels between "I Want to Know Why" and *Huckleberry Finn* are too extensive to be merely coincidental. Anderson was all his life, and especially in the years before the composition of the story, much preoccupied with the masterpiece of the novelist whom he called one of "the two or three really great American artists."⁹ I think it reasonable to assume that "I Want to Know Why," to use Anderson's own words about another story of his, "holds water" because it is like "Mark Twain at his best, the *Huckleberry Finn* Mark Twain."¹⁰

1. Horace Gregory, ed., *The Portable Sherwood Anderson* (New York, 1949), p. 9. Irving Howe, *Sherwood Anderson* (New York, 1951), pp. 94, 124.
2. Howard Mumford Jones and Walter B. Rideout, eds., *The Letters of Sherwood Anderson* (Boston, 1953), p. 31. (Hereinafter cited as *Letters*.)
3. *Letters*, p. 102.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
6. It is interesting to note that *Huckleberry Finn* was more than a great novel to Anderson. In time, it came to represent a symbol of the artist's great creative effort, toward which his work tended, or at least ought to tend. Once when he was lamenting Ring Lardner's avoidance of serious fiction, he commented that the waste would be understandable if only Lardner were gathering force for "his *Huckleberry Finn*." That Lardner wasn't, constituted for Anderson a tragedy of the artist as a young man. ("Four American Impressions," *New Republic*, 32 (October 11, 1922), p. 172.)
7. Anderson underscores the falsity of the town's judgment later in the story when he has Mr. Rieback refuse to go into the brothel with the rest of the men.
8. James M. Cox, "Remarks on the Sad Initiation of *Huckleberry Finn*," *Sewanee Review*, 62 (Summer, 1954), pp. 389-405.
9. *Letters*, p. 3.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

CONNECTICUT YANKEE

(Continued from page 20)

It seems to me that we have in *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* what could have been one of the greatest and most passionate expressions of democratic faith in the nineteenth century. That it failed to live up to its potential can be laid, I think, to several causes. In the first place, Mark Twain functioned almost exclusively as a critic of his time. He could diagnose, but he could not prescribe. In the second

place, he seemingly could not sustain the savage satire which makes up most of the democratic testament; he must forever, by his very nature and literary training, slip from wit into humor and from humor into sheer burlesque. Finally, he gave a slender idea—the idea of what would happen if a nineteenth century Connecticut gun-maker were suddenly dumped into sixth century England—too great a load to carry. This willing little pony has been made to carry a Clydesdale's portion of slavery, injustice, tyranny, the chivalric tradition, the despotism of the Church, the pitiable apathy of men, their superstition and their child-like ignorance. No wonder Mark Twain occasionally found himself riding off in all directions. He is like Hank Morgan at the tournament: there are too many enemies against whom to break a lance.

But for all its faults, it may be that *A Connecticut Yankee* has more things to say to more people than even *Huckleberry Finn*, Twain's one generally admitted masterpiece. Insofar as its main purpose is concerned, one could no more call *A Connecticut Yankee* mere frontier humor than one could call "A Modest Proposal" a whimsical essay.

Hank Morgan's revolution failed, and we can see in that failure, if we will, what Mr. DeVoto calls futility; but I prefer to think that, given enough young men who have been freed from the tyrannies and superstitions of their fathers, and enough time and patience to educate those young men—perhaps only a few at first, but with each generation, more—mankind may finally find its way out of Merlin's cave.

1. Bernard DeVoto, "Introduction," *Mark Twain in Eruption* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1940), p. XXI.
2. *Ibid.*, p. XXIII.
3. John R. Hoben, "Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee*: A Genetic Study," *American Literature*, XVIII (1946), 197-218.
4. Bernard DeVoto, *Mark Twain's America*, (Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1951), p. 212 n.
5. All references to *A Connecticut Yankee* are from *The Family Mark Twain* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1935). Above quotation, p. 654.
6. Bernard DeVoto, *Mark Twain's America*, p. 272.
7. *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, XXXV, 838.
8. *Ibid.*, XXX, 808.
9. *Ibid.*, II, 664.
10. *Ibid.*, XVIII, 731.
11. Italics mine.
12. loc. cit., XVIII, 731.
13. *Ibid.*, VIII, 687-88.
14. *Ibid.*, X, 694.
15. *Ibid.*, XIII, 708.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 709.
17. *Ibid.*, XVIII, 730.
18. *Ibid.*, XX, 741.

LADY FROM FINLAND

(Continued from page 10)

the poultry yard, where the geese, turkeys, and hens vied with each other in gabbling. In a sunny corner several dozing geese stood on one leg, and the cook immediately hastened to point them out to his master.

"So," said the master, "you think that they are created with only one leg. Well, we'll see."

"He clapped his hands together and shouted, 'Shoo!'"

"Immediately the legs came down and the geese waddled off, cackling, on their two feet."

"Well?" said the master triumphantly.

"Well, but—I guess massa didn't shout 'shoo' to the roast."

Having told the story this far, Mark Twain stopped, peered at his listeners roguishly, and then became silent.¹⁰

The ladies whispered something to Mrs. Clemens, who said, "My dear, won't you sing us a few Negro songs tonight?"

Mark Twain mumbled something about hoarseness and a nasty cold, but he sat down at the piano anyway. At first he improvised with his pipe in his mouth, then he began to hum, and finally, putting his pipe aside, he sang in a worn-out but still clear tenor voice several Negro songs.

Most of the songs were spiritual and told about Moses and Pharaoh, Saul and David, David and Goliath, and so forth. One song about Joseph as the interpreter of Pharaoh's dreams was rather playful. There were many references in it to seven fat cows and seven lean cows. Otherwise, even though they were monotonous and sad, they were endowed with emotional, wild poetry, which Mark Twain interpreted very well.

"Moses! Moses! Sing about Moses!" many voices demanded.

Mark Twain struck a few merry chords on the piano and began a comical song about a certain Negro called Moses "who wanted to have golden slippers but couldn't get them." That was the refrain and was sung with real American, Mark Twain humor.¹¹

Later in the evening the talk centered on Finland. In answer to a question about Mark Twain's reputation in her native land, Alexandra Gripenberg gave definite proof of his popularity there. She told them about a certain young man in Helsinki who was so fascinated by Twain's "Story of the Old Ram"¹² that his wife wished she could slaughter the ram herself in order to stop hearing about it. That amused the American humorist so much

that he, as he said himself, "inhaled too much tobacco smoke" and had to leave the room to cough it out.

On his return Mark Twain again crouched in his low armchair and took part in the conversation. He talked on until a late hour, humorously, modestly, pleasantly, and brilliantly. The whole while it seemed to the Finnish visitor, who had heard that Twain was always ready to slip money secretly into the hand of the whole world, as though she could hear under his words the beating of his great, warm heart.

It was late when the party came to an end and the company parted, each one walking home in the dim spring night along the fragrant, tree-shaded streets. Mark Twain lived only a few houses below the one where Alexandra Gripenberg was staying as a guest, and that very same night one of his servants delivered a small, thin package to his newly acquired Finnish acquaintance. In it was Mark Twain's photograph, on which he had written in his own peculiar hand, "In memory of the old ram. Your friend, Mark Twain, i.e., S. L. Clemens."¹³

1. Mark Twain, "Private History of the 'Jumping Frog' Story," *North American Review*, CLVIII (April, 1894), 446. This article was later reprinted in his *Literary Essays*.
2. "Aleksandra Gripenberg," *Iso Tietosanakirja*, IV (1933), 83.
3. Alexandra Gripenberg, *A Half Year in the New World: Miscellaneous Sketches of Travel in the United States*, translated and edited by Ernest John Moyné (Newark, Delaware, 1954). This work was originally published in Swedish as *Ett halft år i Nya Verlden: Strodde resebilder från Förenta Staterna* (Helsinki, 1889); it was translated into Finnish by Hilda Asp as *Uudesta maailmasta: Hajanaisia matkakuvia Amerikasta* (Helsinki, 1891).
4. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 68-69.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.
9. Hopkinson Smith's story, entitled "Ginger and the Goose," appeared in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, LXIV (March, 1882), 138-40. For Smith's source, see Giovanni Boccaccio, *Tales from the Decameron*, translated by Richard Aldington (New York, 1930), pp. 199-201: "Chichibio, Cook to Currado Gianfigliuzzi, Changes Currado's Anger to Laughter, and So Escapes the Punishment with Which Currado Had Threatened Him."
10. Alexandra Gripenberg, pp. 70-71.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 71-72.
12. Chapter XII, Volume II, of *Roughing It*, originally printed in 1872, contains the story of "Jim Blaine and His Grandfather's Ram." See Mark Twain, *Roughing It* ("Author's National Edition, The Writings of Mark Twain," VIII (New York, 1913), 120-27).
13. Alexander Gripenberg, p. 72.

MARK TWAIN'S 'PLUG' AND 'CHAW'

(Continued from page 11)

1. Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (New York, 1885), p. 183.
2. From the journal of David H. Strother, August 9, 1873. Used with the permission of its owner, Mr. D. H. Strother of Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
3. The meeting occurred at the Penn Club following the speeches by descendants of the signers of the Declaration of Independence at Liberty Hall. Strother wrote: "Major Etting did the honours and I was feted with many introductions, Col. Hoyt of Boston and the Dept. of the Gulf in 1862-63, Mark Twain, Genl. Lew Wallace, Senator Kelley, Cox, Lamden, and Rush and others whose names I have forgotten." *Journal*, July 1, 1876.

The dedication of the Mark Twain Birthplace Memorial Shrine was held at the Mark Twain State Park, near Florida, Missouri, on Sunday, June Fifth.

The following tributes were sent to Cyril Clemens and read by him at the ceremonies:

Beginning in early boyhood, I have read virtually everything of Mark Twain's that has been published, and I have always been a great admirer of both the man and his work.

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

I well remember reading Mark Twain's books when I was a boy, and it is my hope that the youth of our country will continue to be inspired and guided by his fine works.

RICHARD M. NIXON

Nobody has been so completely American as Mark Twain. His portrayal of American life, with the most pungent humor in our history, should make his works required reading by every person who attains to education. It is good that his life and works are kept before our people.

HERBERT C. HOOVER

Before I was twelve years old I had read everything Mark Twain had published up to that time. I have the purported complete set of his works and a lot of other publications of articles which have never been included in his books. I am still telling Mark Twain stories.

HARRY S. TRUMAN

Mark Twain was great and his writings are lasting because of his keen understanding of people. He was both tolerant and penetrating and blessed with an articulateness which permitted him to translate his thoughts and knowledge into his writings.

CHRISTIAN A. HERTER

